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September 25, 2018

The Honorable Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S, Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
House Natural Resources Committee
2057 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Endangered Species Act

Dear Chairman Gosar:

Imperial Irrigation District submits this letter in strong support of the efforts by the Congressional Western Caucus to modernize the Endangered Species Act (ESA). As you and many stakeholders across the West have long recognized, the ESA has become too cumbersome and prohibitive of responsible economic activity and jobs. We fully support efforts by Congress to modernize the ESA and the introduction of the various related bills is an important step in that direction.

More resources are spent by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on ESA paperwork and litigation than providing on-the-ground conservation of species and their habitat. The ESA has far too often been used primarily as a means to prevent or delay responsible economic activity rather than to protect species. The lack of effectiveness of the ESA is clear in that only about 2 percent of listed species have actually been recovered. It is time to modernize the ESA so that it is focused on the original intent of protecting and recovering species.

Federal ESA listings often thwart existing state, local and private efforts to protect species, and the threat of a listing may run counter to voluntary conservation efforts under existing regulations. Rather than imposing one-size-fits-all species listings that harms communities and obstructs on-the-ground conservation, FWS should defer to state and local plans that promote reliable, voluntary, conservation agreements.

We appreciate the hard work and effort of the Congressional Western Caucus to identify critical concepts for ESA modernization and urge Congress to pass the various bills that make up this package.

Sincerely,

Antonio Ortega
Governmental Affairs and Communications Officer